PITTSBURGH FAN FORUM

1976 MAR. APR.

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Club Business...

Next Meetings: The Pittsburgh Comix Club's next meeting will take place on April 10, at 6:30 PM, at Greg Eide's far-famed comic book shop, 636 ButlerSt., Route 8, in Etna. The meeting after that will be on May 8, also a Saturday. Everybody be there!

Hillman Library Exhibit: Our exhibit on comic books at Pittsburgh University's Hillman Library has been so successful that the people at the University have decided to extend the show another few weeks. In fact, our idea is to establish a permanent center for comic art research here in the Pittsburgh area, and Charles Aston at Special Collections agrees that the library is an excellent location.

Due to the generosity of an anonymous donor, every dollar's worth of comics material donated to the show or collection will be matched by a buck's worth of comics stuff by this donor. No limit will be set other than the complete depletion of this person's collection. Expensive contributions are encouraged! Give all comic books (or whatever) to Lou Pascazi at the meetings, and he'll determine the value of the items involved. We will personally make sure that all metrial regardless of cost will be handled with the utmost of care and attention and will be placed in the collection. So if you have anything in your collection you are particularly proud of and wish displayed, donate!

Please, though, no junk! Make it a worthwhile collection. Almost all golden age and EC comics are wanted, and old Marvels and DCs will be put to completing runs of titles. A list of comics especially wanted (the better the condition, the better for us) can be obtained from Lou or Mark Lerer at any meeting, or by writing to Mark. When don ating books, please list your name, address, phone, and title and number of the comic on an index card. We all feel this is a worthwhile and (though ambitious) achievable goal for the club.

Now For Sale: COMIX AND FANDOM #1 and #2 are now for sale at all club meetings, or yours by mail for $1.00 plus 35¢ postage! The first issue of B. B. COMICS is also for sale at meetings, or by mail for 25¢ plus 15¢ postage! Posters by Ben Ruiz of his flying man (an 11" x 17" version of the cover of PFF #13/14) are for sale at all meetings for half a buck! Copies of the PITTCON '76 program book are available, also! Isn't that thrilling news??

Whatever happenned to PITTCON: Yes, the convention of last March was a big success for all involved, and you'll be reading a report of the same event in these pages. Special thanks to members Hyde, Ruiz, and Daley for their generous financial contributions.

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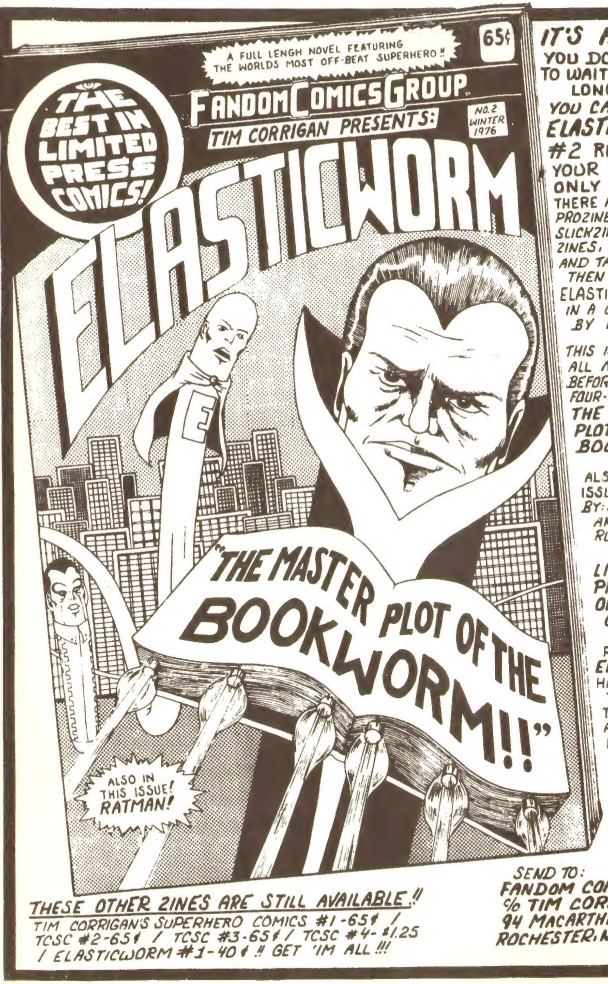
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On Sword-and-sorcery
by Howard P. Siegel

Somewhere between the beginning of Prince Valiant and the middle of Flash Gordon, someone got the idea that swords and sorcery would blend well. History and science fiction became subservient to total non-fiction. Every once in a while the major publishers, while seeking new shticks, will try their hand at s&s. Recently their efforts have been unsuccessful ones as witnessed by Fafrhd and the Grey Mouser and even worse, Nightmaster in the waning days of SHOWCASE. It takes a great deal of ballyhoo to stir readers on any subject. "The Spectre Is Coming" banners appeared in every DC comic title for months and months. "Gable is back and Garson's got him!" "An alien spacecraft has landed at Grovers Mills!" "Now! At last! Robert E. Howard.... The Great .... The Greatest! Marvel has him! Conan is here! In black and white and color too! In all his savage glory!" It worked for a while, became passe, was ressurrected several times, but in truth and despite Roy Thomas's thoughts to the contrary, even the barbarian has failed to reach the ranks of the ultra-successful.

The key to appreciating s&s is to bear in mind totally that you are accepting the theme as complete fantasy. Do that and you can enjoy the ethereal backgrounds, the sinester motives, the primeval attitudes of the heroes and heroines. Become objective and you won't accept the fact that a barbarian can easily slay a brontosaurus sized two headed serpent that breathes fire and can fly. In paperbacks, the written word sets the mood better than pictorial fare. I know many fans that will buy anything with a Frazetta cover and disdain the comic books for that simple reason. However good or bad in reading quality, s&s has certainly become a favorite subject of fan artists as evidenced by the covers and contributions gracing so many of today's fanzines. They usually fall into the same basic mold. A naked girl being saved by a sword-bearing warrior whose body is half consumed by the monster whose head he had just decapitated. Maximum use of solid blacks and close dotted halftones, attention to the flora and fauna in the background and swipes of Wally Wood's alien forest animals usually fill out the full page presentation. Then there is a special vocabulary, one containing strange sounding names. The more double vowels, the better. The storylines must be repleat with as many of these as can be fitted in without insulting the reader's intelligence. And there must always be a geographic goal. A mystical city to be reached, an area where food is abundant to save the starving tribe. A cave to shelter the people during climactic upheavals, but occupied by some half-human ogre who must be eradicated first. I often think that the AAA would do landslide business in the world of swords and sorcery.

continued next page

NEWS: Yes, you read right last issue. Two months ago, DC publisher Carmine Infantino was fired by Warner Communications, for many reasons, including a general drop in sales. The new publisher is Jenette Kahn, twenty-nine year old former publisher of scholastic magazines (the exact position and from-whence-she-came we don't know yet). No major editorial changes are planned except for the revival of a few books Infantino cancelled.

Marv Wolfman resigned as editor-in-chief of Marvel Comics last February to concentrate on writing. The new editor-in-chief will be Gerry Conway (not Roy Thomas as you may have read elsewhere). Conway's books at National will be handed over to other editors. Wolfman will be writing and editing six books, in the same manner as Len Wein is currently doing.

Personnel changes: Tony Isabella no longer works for Marvel. Jim Starlin has quit Marvel (again!). Kirby will be taking over the Black Panther strip, Marv Wolfman will be writing POWERMAN (Lee Elias will draw it!). Jim Shooter will write, and perhaps lay out, a Tigra story, Neal Adams is drawing a 40-page Conan story, Roy Thomas is moving to California, and Marie Severin will color the Kirby 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY book, which, after its premiere in $1.50 format, will be a continuing feature, probably priced at 50¢. Kirby has also drawn a $1.50 Captain America special edition, with several pages being inked by Barry Smith-- no, we are not making this up, and it's all true!

What else? Vince Colletta is now art director at National!

Marvel will remain at a 25¢ cover price. However, a test is being run in certain parts of the country where Marvel comics are priced at 30¢ for two months. Marvel, though, decided not to go along with the plan, so the 25 cent price remains. Confused? Imagine how they feel!

Stan Lee's editorial powers have recently been made more use of-- Stan now reads many books before they are published, something that he hadn't been doing between the time he became publisher and about a year ago. He also must okay each cover before it is used.

The really big news, though, is that our own Howard Bender will be lettering Rich Buckler's DEATHLOK! Today, lettering, tomorrow....

Plugs and such: The far-acclaimed MENOMONEE FALLS GAZETTE and GUARDIAN have gone to monthly status. For information on these newspaper strip periodicals, see the many issues of PFF in which we've plugged them!*** Here's a long overdue hello to the members of the Ashtabula Comics Club, a new organization with whom we've been exchanging fanzines and visits. Frank Rizzo, Terry Hall, and others made it to PITTCON '76, where we got to arrange all sorts of neat little projects for the future. To join (and subscribe to their fine bulletin, FARTHER OUT), send $2.50 to Frank Rizzo / 3502 Hiawatha Ave. / Ashtabula, Ohio 44004, and tell them you're a PCC member!

The Great Great Grandson of Origins of Martial Comics by a Previous Marriage

by Kenn "The Man" Klaczak

Chapter One: I'm Sky, Fly me.

Jolly Jack and I were sitting around at the batty bullpen one ding dong day back in 1971, throwing darts at a picture of Crafty Carmine, when suddenly Jovial Jack choked on a piece of over-ripe eggplant he'd been snacking on at one of our nutty-but-inspired plot conferences. "That's it!" I shouted, jumping up so violently that I knocked over my over-worked Smilin' Stan autographed cigar from my dog-eared desk.

Now, effendi, you're probably wondering what this has to do with our 98th origins book our our cloud-hoppin' Sky-Rider, right? Well, just hold on to your sheckles, Faithful One, and all shall be revealed!

As the Jubilant One rolled on the floor in acute agony, I chanced to look out of our Madison Ave. office window only to spy the smotherin' sinful Fun City smog trying to creep in. It all clicked together!! Back in those days, before it bored everyone to death, ecology was a big issue! What a natural! A hero living in a totally polluted world watching his friends choking to death on the poisoned air! A world of mutated beasts, future-type weapons, endless plot possibilities! A way to make more money! I loved it! How could it miss??

And for the longest time Joking Jack wanted to do a strip about a flying man with lumps of plexiglass all over his body. A character who could fly, spout profound dialog, and run into an occasional omnipotent being. All those things that are Martial's stock-in-trade, n'est-ce pas? And it all fit--just like the character was writing himself!

Jesting Jack and I plotted the titanic tale you're about to read during a hasty ride to a mid-Manhattan emergency room, and then I rushed back to my typewriter to hammer out the first script. Yes, True Believer, I know it sounds strange, but that's how we do things in this, The Martial Age Of Comics! We had the character, the plot, the story ...all we needed was a name for the guy. Somehow "The Amazing Flying Man With Plexiglass Lumps All Over His Body" wasn't glitzy enough. Then I remembered that old song, "Sky Pilot." Since our hero wasn't a pilot, and I didn't think I could get away with it anyway, I changed our hero's name to Sky-Rider, and the rest is history!

So, prepare to relive those halcyon days of yore, let your mind wander back to the fateful day when you first saw SKY-RIDER #1 peeking out at you, from among our other 681 titles on the stand. Or perhaps you saw it in MARTIAL'S GREATEST COMMENTS #62, or MARTIAL TALES #94, or GIANT-SIZE SKY-RIDER KING SIZE SPECIAL #2, or maybe MARTIAL TREASURY EDITION #6. We reprint these furshlugginer tales so many times, ya have to have read 'em someplace, Faithful Ones.

Just remember, as you re-read Sky-Rider's first senses-shattering adventure, what Jocular Jack says: "With this strip, the sky's the limit!" Nuff Said!

Excelsior!

Make the theme a comical one, and you have another genre. A successful one by recent standards. For years, one of the most popular European cartoon characters has been Asterix the Gaul by the fine writer-artist team of Goscinny and Uderzo. And look what Dik Browne has done with Hagar the Horrible. That is the paradox which Robert E. Howard, long since gone from this earth, does not have to be faced with. It takes more than think tank work to turn out a decent s&s story than most other types, yet the audience is a small-but-steady one. Burlesque it, and everyone likes it. Something of an enigma.

What it all amounts to is that a sword-and-sorcery buff must be made of of sturdy mettle. His psyche is theatened by those who do not see in the subject matter what he does, nor are they in any mood to accept what he does in an effort to appreciate it. An uphill battle. And a test to find out if the pen is truly mightier than the sword.

* * *

FROM THE FILES OF... YOUHOUSE

CENTRAL NATIONAL WSA BUREAU NO. 527

Robert Youhouse
321 Gumbert St.
Port Vue, Pa. 15133

Beginning: A Series on some (obscure) female comic book characters.

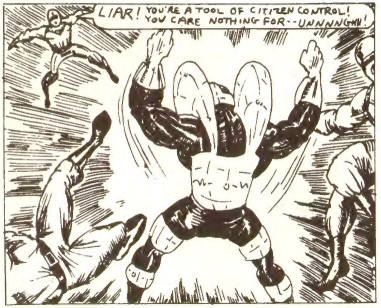
Shirl The Jungle Girl:

HARVEY HITS #1 (Sept., 1957) featured Shirl the Jungle Girl in the back up story to the Phantom. Shirl wore an orange leopard skin costume with black spots. She described herself as beautiful and muscular, a jungle girl who was simple and naive. In the story, Shirl is shown riding an elephant. She hits a branch and it falls to the ground. She starts swinging on a nearby rope. She crashes into a tree. She meets a man who is looking for King Solomon's Mines. She agrees to take him there. A monkey accompanies them on the trip. On the way to the mines, two men hold them up. They want her to show them the way to the mines. She agrees to take them there. When they get there, Shirl picks up one of the mines and accidentally drops it. It blows up. She is shown in the next panel saying, "I wouldn't care if the whole silly place cracked in half and sank."

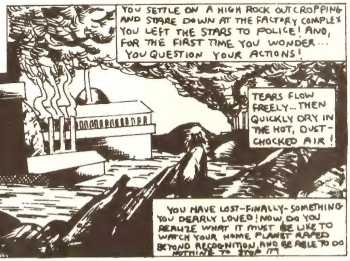
Sapphire Stagg:

(From METAMORPHO #1, July-Aug. 1965, "Attack Of The Atomic Avenger.") Rex Mason, a.k.a. Metamorpho, and Sapphire, the daughter of Simon Stagg, are at a posh charity ball. The waiter slips, and Rex shapes his hand into a bowl and catches the driks he dropped. Rex decides to dance with Sapphire and changes his shoes into hydrogen gas. Rex and Sapphire go walking and help people in trouble. They go to the balcony of Simon's house, Rex kisses Sappire, Java sees this and doesn't like it (he likes Sapphire), and the story ends with Simon Stagg having to put Metamorpho back together again. Sapphire utters the now-classic words, "Oh, you must, Father! I can't go on living without Rex!"

* * *


LIAR! YOU'RE A TOOL OF CITIZEN CONTROL! YOU CARE NOTHING FOR--UNNNNGHH!

IGNORING THE STUNNED TERRORIST'S SKYRIDER, DROPS TO THE GROUND, ONLY TO DISCOVER THAT HE'S... TOO LATE!
VERANNE...WHY? I COULD HAVE GIVEN YOU THE STARS! I WOULD HAVE GIVEN YOU MY LIFE!
DID YOU LOVE YOUR PEOPLE... YOUR HERITAGE SO MUCH? I DON'T UNDERSTAND?


YOU SETTLE ON A HIGH ROCK OUTCROPPING AND STARE DOWN AT THE FACTORY COMPLEX YOU LEFT THE STARS TO POLICE. AND, FOR THE FIRST TIME, YOU WONDER... YOU QUESTION YOUR ACTIONS!
TEARS FLOW FREELY... THEN QUICKLY DRY IN THE HOT, DUST-CHOCKED AIR!
YOU HAVE LOST--FINALLY--SOMETHING YOU DEARLY LOVED! NOW DO YOU REALIZE WHAT IT MUST BE LIKE TO WATCH YOUR HOME PLANET RAPED BEYOND RECOGNITION, AND BE FREE TO DO NOTHING TO STOP IT!

...OR WERE YOU A LITTLE GIRL PLAYING A GAME WITH RULES YOU COULDN'T UNDERSTAND? SURELY THIS PLANET--SO MISUSED BY ITS PEOPLE AS TO BE ALMOST UNLIVABLE, WASN'T WORTH YOUR YOUNG LIFE!

...VERANNE...

SOME HOURS LATER... THE CITIZEN CONTROL CENTER!
DON'T YOU SEE... SOMEONE HAD TO STAY TO PRODUCE THE NEEDED POWERPAKS FOR THE CRUISERS WE COULDN'T LET THIS HAPPEN TO THE NEW WORLDS!
BEFORE...THIS WAS EASIER THAN DESIGNING ALTERNATIVES! THEY WOULD HAVE LET YOU LEAVE EARTH...
...SOMEDAY, WHEN THEY HAD ENOUGH GOODS! YOU ALL WOULD HAVE LEFT--
THEY TOLD ME YOU COULD!!

OH, HI, SKY-RIDER! YOU DID A GOOD JOB...
SKY? WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?
BA-KOOOM!

THE CENTER LIES IN RUINE... AND YOU HAVE GIVEN UP THE LAST TIE TO HUMANITY! YOU ARE TRUELY A MAN ALONE ON A TOTALLY HOSTILE WORLD!
THE SWEAT FEELS COLD UNDER THE NEOPRENE SUIT! YOU PONDER WHAT YOU'VE DONE FOR A CAUSE THAT, UNTIL TODAY, HAD LITTLE MEANING TO YOU! EVEN NOW, NEITHER SIDE IN THIS CONFLICT HAS ANY USE FOR YOU!
ONLY THE SKY EMBRACES YOU IN EXHILIRATING WINDS! YOU SOAR AND SOAR--TO THE LIMITS OF YOUR POWER! THIS IS YOUR ONLY HOME NOW, THE SKY... AND YOU ARE... THE SKY-RIDER!!
NEXT ISH: HUNTER HAWKE!!

SWEAT CLINGS TO SKIN BENEATH THE SHINY NEO-PLASTINE UNIFORM YOU WEAR...
WEAPOD-COMPUTER READOUTS INDICATE ACCURATE FLIGHT DIRECTION...
POWER SOURCES HUM QUIETLY IN YOUR EARS AS OXYGEN FLOWS STEADILY THRU YOUR IMPLANTS BLOCKING OUT THE DEATH-DEALING POLLUTION ALL AROUND YOU!
AND YOU ARE...
Sky-rider
BY KENN KLAKLAK
THEORY YOUR DUTY REMAINS THE SAME. YOU STOP A SMALL GROUP OF DETERMINED TERRORISTS...
RADICALS WHO SEEK TO CHANGE THE ORDER YOU'VE BEEN REARED TO LOVE AND RESPECT FOR ALL YOUR TWENTY YEARS...
WAIT! THE CHARGE CAREFULLY, MEGAN!
WE HAVE NO DESIRE TO DIE WITH THIS DAMN FACTORY!
IT'S DONE! THIS SHOULD SET BACK PRODUCTION SHOW THEM WE'RE TIRED OF SLAVING FOR THE COLONIES! --!!!
SKY-RIDER!
NO... NOT NOW, SKY! WHY DID YOU HAVE TO FIND US NOW?
STOP HIM! WE CAN'T LET HIM INTERFERE!
HE'S TOO STRONG FOR US... I ONLY HOPE SKY'LL LISTEN TO ME!
STOP ME? MY, YOU REBELS CERTAINLY LIKE TO DREAM! WHY CAN'T YOU BE CONTENT WITH THINGS THE WAY THEY ARE?
NO, SKY, DAMN YOU... WE CAN'T! YOU'RE OF THE NOBILITY - YOU MUST BE FORCED TO LIVE IN THIS TOTALLY POLLUTED ENVIRONMENT... TO WORK NIGHT AND DAY IN THE FACTORIES UNDER ARMED GUARD, ALL FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE WEALTHY STAR COLONIES!
VERANNE, YOU... YOU'RE IN THIS!
YES, MY LOVE!
TO THE DEATH!
VERANNE MAKES A FUTILE EFFORT TO HOLD BACK THE MAN SHE LOVES BUT, CHOKED BY THE POISONOUS AIR, SHE MISJUDGES THE DISTANCE, AND FALLS FROM THE CATWALK...
GET HIM - HE KILLED HER! HE KILLED MY DAUGHTER!
NO! NO!!
LET ME GO! I CAN STILL REACH HER... I'LL SAVE HER!

The Life And Times Of Conan Of Cimmeria: According To Thomas.
by Ron Kienzle.

(Editor's note: The PCC is planning publication of Ron Kienzle's current massive project, a complete study of Roy Thomas's Conan stories. When published, this volume will contain an index, facts, synopses of all the stories, and so on. The following article is both a "teaser" and what we think is an interesting introductory piece of work.)

Some forty years ago, Robert E. Howard created one of the most popular heroes of twentieth century American literature, Conan the barbarian. Howard created an entire larger-than-life world for his hero, the Hyborian Age, said to have existed ten thousand years before our time.

In 1970, a writer for Marvel Comics, Roy Thomas, took up the task of adapting Howard's character to comic book format. Drawing not only from Howard's works and papers, but from those of fantasy writers Gardner Fox, John Jakes, Lin Carter, and others, Thomas created anew the world of Conan.

In the five years of Conan's comic book career, Thomas has written more stories about the Cimmerian than Howard himself. Conan's career is far more detailed than that chronicled in the paprback series by Howard, De Camp, and Carter, much of which is unavailable to Thomas due to copyright disputes.

My work is an attempt to present the saga of Conan of Cimmeria as it has been appearing in Thomas's books in chronological order. I will try not to lose all the flavor of the Thomas Conan saga, but if I fail, forgive me.

Nothing is known about Conan's life until his fifteenth birthday. Conan told, some years later, a servant girl of the sorcerer Zoqqanor that upon turning fifteen he was sent out of his tribe into the mid-winter hills. He was given a bear-skin and a sword. He ate well on the kill of three wolves, a baby deer, after killing the predators. Conan spent the night under a large fallen log. In the morning, the youth decided to explore the forbidden high hills that bordered his home. In these hills, Conan met the dark haired Ursla, Priestess of the Wild, ahe who ran with bears.

continued next page

'All Around'

column by Ben Pondexter

Great Moments In Fandom PITTCON '76 Style:

Ben Ruiz drawing for the Northside Middle School kids at the Hillman Special Collection Show * Dinner at The Cork And Bottle— all twenty-five strong of the PCC with Len Wein, Marv Wolfman, Glynis Wein, Jim Shooter, Scott Edelman and Roger Slifer. You had to be there to know how much fun it was * Having people tell me how much they learned in the workshops, especially with Prof. Jerome Niedermeier * Patting ourselves on the back for running the con so smoothly * Finding Tom Hegeman after stranding him at the airport * Never seeing the whole art show-- there was so much of it, and it changed a little every day * Being told by Len and Marv that they know where Pittsburgh is * Picking up the first copies of B.B. COMICS * Talking to the Erie and Ashtabula groups all night on Saturday, planning a joint meeting in the spring * Seeing Howard Bender as Firelord and Joni Reich as Lady Sif * Marv Wolfman's black trench coat. In it, from the back, he almost looked like Shaft * Say, how can anyone say they don't like costume parades? * The look on the faces of the kids as they stand in line for all the comic books. And most of them were quiet and well-behaved! * Breaking even. The first PCC project that we never went in the hole for * I gave everyone a vacation except me, what with post-con details being as much as pre-con details * Special thanks to Duquesne University and their special Student Union. Your leader worked like a dog, and your facilities were tremendous * There were people who promised and didn't deliver, but the rest of you all made me proud, proud, proud. Thank you all. ****

(Note: one item Ben missed was the car ride driving the guests back to the air port. Seven people in my father's Pontiac! Slifer will never recover! -- Mark)

Conan continues to appeal to me; it's great the way he's never at a loss for action, or for words** Everybody vote in the fan art awards this year! Only eight people from our club voted last year. A ballot appeared last issue **Seems that we're going to have two King Kong movies soon. Courts have rules that at least 18 months must go by between the release of the two. I still don't understand how anybody can improve on perfection! Why try?** Paperbacks of Broom Hilda are hard to find around here. Anybody...?

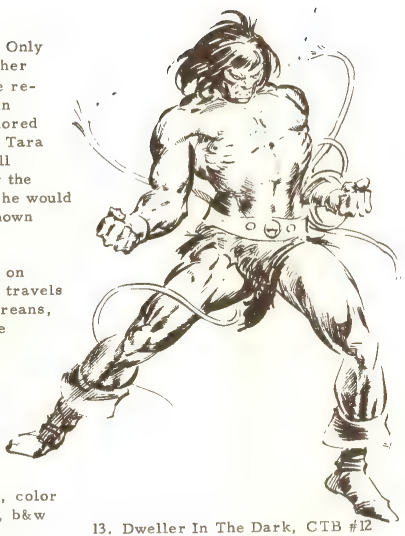
We should see some big changes from Marvel and DC with all their shifts in personnel. But I wonder if anyone has a solution to the problem of distribution. We need to scrap the whole system and start all over (as the pros said at the PITTCON '76 panel, this is responsible for some major sales slides) but I can't imagine anyone being willing. What about the possibility of distributing comics through clubs like ours? ** Everyone agrees television needs a shot in the arm** Just read the MEDIASCENE article about the Superman movie. A reform is needed in the comic business when it comes to creative rights. I hope even ACBA can keep the pressure on. ** Donald Lam is one of the finest detectives around! Just finished Cut Thin To Win and loved it. Those who don't know: Donald is one of Earle Stanley Garner's creations and has never-- thank God— been on televison. He's too good. ** Bye!

* * *

her true form of a bat creature. Only the power of the Star Stone kept her in Conan's world. She could have remained had Conan replaced her in the gem. As she faded, she implored the barbarian to recall that once Tara had found him fair. To Conan, all had seemed a dream. Especially the prophecy that in times to come, he would rule the greatest nation of the known world.

(Editor's note again: Ron will go on from this point to cover Conan's travels in Aesgard, against the Hyperboreans, and eventually to the Tower of the Elephant.)

* * *



A Conan Chronology
by Ron Kienzle

Key:
CTB: Conan The Barbarian, color
SS: Savage Sword Of Conan, b&w
ST: Savage Tales, b&w
GSC: Giant Size Conan, color

1. People Of The Dark, SS #6,
2. The Coming Of Conan, CTB #1,
3. Lair Of The Beast Men, CTB #2
4. Twilight Of The Grim Grey God, CTB#3
5. Tower Of The Elephant, CTB #4
6. Zukala's Daughter, CTB #5
7. Devil Wings Of Shadizar, CTB #6
8. The Lurker Within, CTB #7
9. Keepers Of The Crypt, CTB #8
10. Garden Of Fear, CTB #9
11. Beware The Wrath Of Anu, CTB #10
12. Rogues In The House, CTB #11
13. Dweller In The Dark, CTB #12
14. Web OF The Spider God, CTB #13
15. A Sword Called Stormbringer, CTB #14
16. Green Empress Of Melnibone, CTB#15
17. Gods Of Bal-Saggoth, CTB #17
18. Thing In The Temple, CTB #18
19. Hawks From The Sea, CTB #19
20. Black Hound Of Vengeance, CTB #20
21. Monster Of The Monoliths, CTB #21
22. Shadow Of The Vulture, CTB #23
23. The Song Of Red Sonja, CTB #24
24. Mirrors Of Kharam-Akkad, CTB #25
25. Hour Of The Griffin, CTB #26

continued next page

I. Earliest Known Adventure.

The Priestess took Conan to her mountain cabin. There she told him that "many men had come to" her. After Conan asked why, he was told he was young and foolish. That night, the boybecame a man. Conan returned to hos tribe the next morning. He told the elders of his tribe his story and showed them a brooch the Priestess had given him. The jewel lit fire in the elders' eyes. They laughed and swore to take the young Conan south with them when they marched on Venarium.

And so, a few weeks later, Conan took part in the battle of Venarium, the hated fortress of the Aquilonians. The Aquilonians and their allies, the Gundermen, fought well. But the hoard of northern barbarians won. The Aquilonians died almost to the last man. One of the survivors, a foolhardy Gunderman named Gaeric, fought Conan to protect a girl Tamera. Conan had no intention of harming her. In fact, instead of killing Gaeric, Conan merely brained the fool.

Soon, though, both Gunderman and Cimmerian battled to save Tamera from some hellish creatures, inhabitants of the caverns that the girl had fled to. All three escaped , but Conan took a different route. Separated by a waterfall, Conan could only look helplessly as both Gunderman and his lover fell to their deaths attempting to flee from the creatures.

II. As A Mercenary.

In the summer following the battle at Venarium, Conan joined an Aesirian band of warriors. It was in this adventure that Conan saw his destiny.

The leader of the enemies of the Aesir, the Vanir, sought the aid of Shakosh, called the Shaman, to defeat their enemies. The Shaman agreed, on the condition that the Vanir bring him a young warrior "far mightier than either of you." They suggested the Cimmerian foe. The wizard accepted the Vanirs' suggestion and sent his crimson bat-winged devils to collect their prize. Thereupon, Conan was brought to the cave of the Shaman.

Conan was imprisoned with a beautiful woman. Outside the bars, the wizard held the "ceremony of transferal." To impress his allies, the Shaman commanded a Star Stone to show the past. The gem revealed the glory of ancient Valusia and its barbarian king, Kull of Atlantis; the birth of Conan himself; and then, the crowning of Conan as king of Aquilonia. This of course was a future, one that Conan should not have. Intoxicated by the visions, the Shaman delved further and further into the future, until he went mad from seeing man's ultimate conquest of space itself.

Using the commotion to break out of his wooden prison, Conan destroyed the Star Stone. Conan took up his female companion, Tara, and barely outraced the cataclysm of his own causing. The woman returned then to

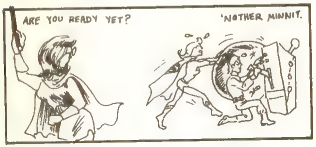
continued next page

P.C.C. Spotlight: on Mercy Van Vlack

And how long did it take you to draw this picture?

Oh, about twenty-one years or so.

I started drawing in the year 1. I drew on paper, the wall, light switch plates, the TV, the floor, my mother's note paper, anything up until high school and college (The Art Institute Of Philadelphia) where I discovered zip-a-tone (those gray areas). While in Junior High, though, I fermented an interest in comic books that had been quietly growing from tot-hood, disturbing the unbelieving Norristownians, as I devoured every issue of the Teen Titans and The Brave And Bold in cobwebbed corners with unholy glee. A loner.



Then I ran into Margie Spears (Bratt) in high school, and we both devoured those comics with the inclusion of The Legion Of Superheroes, some group I'd never seen before. But she insisted it was "good stuff."

Reading Superboy and The Legion proved to be my undoing, for, nestled in a letter column was a teaser inserted by mischievous Mike Flynn, mentioning a Legion Fan Club. A few letters from Margie and me (profusely illustrated!) soon disclosed that there was also a fanzine, edited by Harry Broertjes

"What's a fanzine?"

And the story goes on from there, The Legion Outpost being my first step into the dank, insidious perversions of that fun place called fandom. ("I'm not the only crazy comic crad!" and that's comforting to know.)

I prefer working with a rapidograph -- a steady line self-contained ink pen-- no more spilled Pelikan black and broken crowquille points! (and sometimes brush.) I also work on a newspaper, pasting up ads for various publications and getting in a little artwork here and there. Recently, I've joined two-and-a-half apas, attend the Creation and July cons in N.Y., am member of the P.C.C., and contrib to over twelve fanzines. Soooo, the fan is the sum of her parts, and now you know sum about mine!

* * *

26. Blood-Jewel Of Bel-Hissar, CTB #27

27. Moon Of Zembabwei, CTB #28

28. Two Against Turan, CTB #29

29. Hand Of Nergal, CTB #30

30. Shadow In The Tomb, CTB #31

31. Flame Winds Of Lost Khitai, CTB#32

32. Death And Seven Wizards, CTB #33

33. Temptress In The Tower Of Flame, CTB #34

34. Hell-Spawn Of Kara Shehr, CTB#35

35. Beware The Hyrkanians Bearing Gifts, CTB #36

36. Demons Of The Summit, SS #3

37. Curse Of The Golden Skull, CTB #37

38. Warrior And The WereWoman, CTB #38

39. Dragon From The Inland Sea, CTB #39

40. Fiend From The Forgotten City, CTB #40

41. Garden Of Death And Life, CTB #41

42. Night Of The Gargoyle, CTB #42

43. Curse Of The Undead Man, SS#1

44. Tower Of Blood, CTB #43

45. Of Flame And The Fiend, CTB #44

46. Last Ballad Of Laza-Lanti, CTB#45

47. Curse Of The Conjurer, CTB #46

48. Goblins In The Moonlight, CTB #47

49. Rats Dance At Ravengard, CTB #48

50. Wolf-Woman, CTB #49

51. Dweller In The Pool, CTB #50

52. Man Born Of Demon, CTB #51

53. Alter And The Scorpion, CTB #52

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54. Night Of The Dark God, ST #4

55. Black Colossus, SS #2

56. At The Mountain Of The Moon God, SS #3

57. Iron Shadows In The Moon, SS #4

58. A Witch Shall Be Born, SS #5

59. Sleeper Beneath The Sands, SS#6

60. Red Nails, ST#2

61. Lurker From The Catacombs, ST#3

62. Hour Of The Dragon, GSC #1

63. Conan Bound, GSC #2

64. To Tarantia And The Tower, GSC#3

65. Swords Of The South, GSC #4

Time Of Occurance unknown:
Frost Giant's Daughter, ST#1,
reprinted CTB #16 and SS #1
Secret Of Skull River, ST #5

* * *

The Great American Vampire Murder Mystery fiction by Tom Hegeman

My name is Ventured. Nathan Ventured. My friends call me Nat. Other men call me Mr. Ventured. Women don't call me. I call them.

I'm a private detective. I was sitting in my office one day scanning the racing page of the morning paper. Suddenly the phone rang.

I picked it up. It was Police Commissioner Beste. I have a few friends on the force. The Commissioner is one of them.

"Nat," he said, "I've got a dilly of a case for you. Meet me at 27 Walnut St."

"I'm on my way," I said.

I arrived ten minutes later. It looked like they had the entire detective division there. I walked over to the Commissioner and asked, "What's the problem?"

What I next saw hit me like five double martinis. The Commissioner had brought his daughter along. Her name is Wilda. She stood four-feet-nine and weighed at least 350. Her old man never took her on a case except when I was along. I think he's trying to get us hitched. I fought back the urge to puke.

The Commissioner led me down a dark alley next to the building. Wilda waddled ahead of us. Suddenly she stopped and gagged. "Oh, how awful," she cried.

"What's the matter?" I asked. "Can't stand the sight of a little blood?"

"No, it's not that," she gasped. "Look."

There on the ground was a man's body. It was chalk white, completely drained of blood. In the neck were two holes each an inch in diameter, five inches apart.

"Interesting," I said. "Vampire."

"Yes," replied the Commisssioner. "Captain O'Hooligan says that from the size of the fang marks he must be about twenty feet tall."

"Should be easy to track down."

"That's what I thought. But this is the fourth victim in as many days."

"You've got a problem, Commissioner." We left the scene.

The next night at my office we discussed the case over a couple of shots of scotch.

"Do you have a list of the names of the victims?" I asked. The Commissioner handed me the list.

"Hmmm. Alfred A. Aardvark, Benson B. Baboon, Charles C. Chimp, and yesterday's victim, Donald D. Dalmation."

"You think there's a pattern?"

I grabbed the phone book and made a quick check. "Commissioner," I said, "you'd better get all the men you can spare over to 49 Maple Ave."

"Why, who lives there?"

"Edgar E. Elephant," I said, loading my rod.

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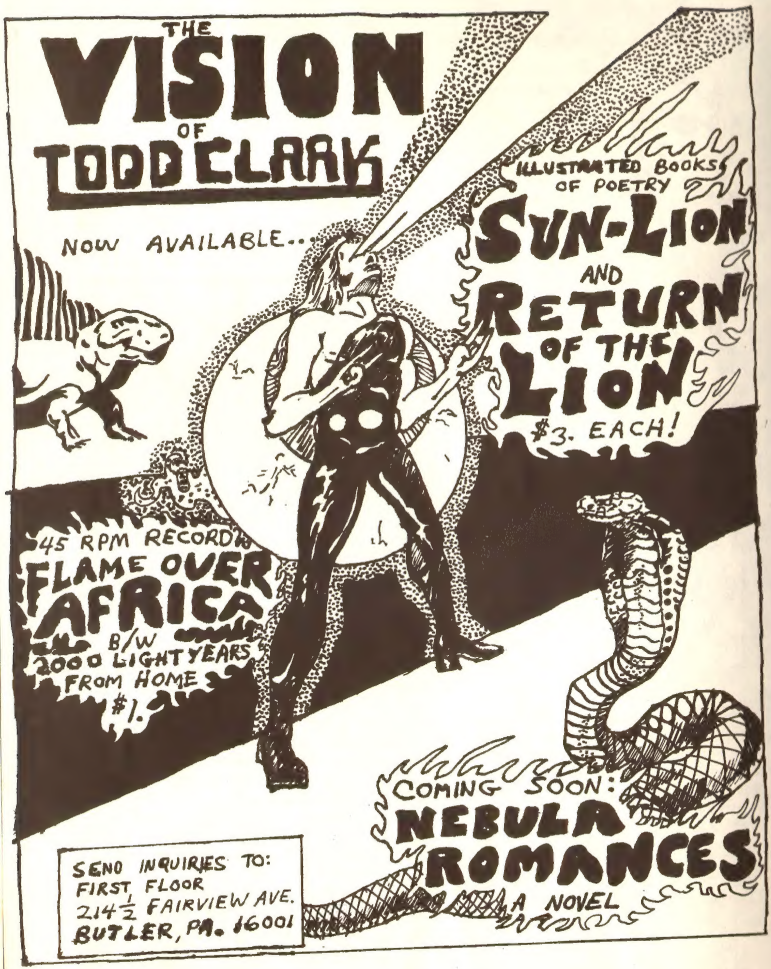
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Jersey Jeff was strictly small time. I'd tangled with him five, maybe six, times. He was no threat. I put my gun in my pocket.

"Pretty brave of you putting you're gun away like that."

"Why? You never carry one."

"Yeah. I can't stand the noise. But now I don't need one. It's tough, Ventured, but you've just stumbled on to one of the Mob's biggest secrets. I can't let you leave here alive."

"Try and stop me."

Jersey turned to a bedroom and yelled "Waldo!" Then I heard the same shuffling noise I had heard in the alley. All of a sudden, there in the doorway, blood still dripping from its tusks, stood a vampire walrus. I drew my gun.

"Shoot away, Ventured," laughed Jersey. "You can't kill a vampire with ordinary bullets. And I doubt that you run around with a gun full of silver bullets."

"Right again, Jersey," I replied, "but I've got something just as good. Get in here Fred."

In walked Fred. Fred is a porcupine. The look on Jersey Jeff's face said everything. I knew he'd guessed the truth.

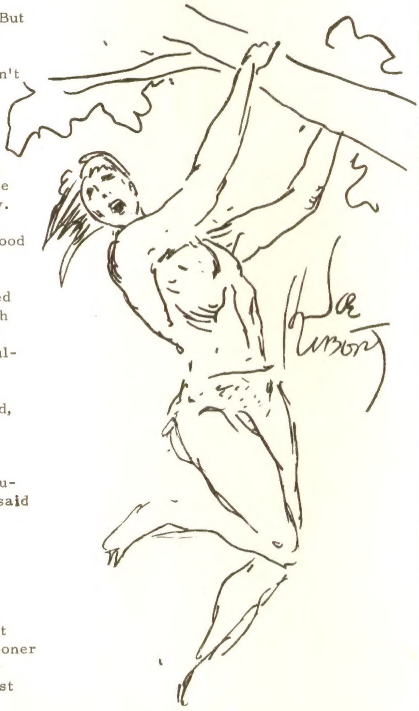
"He doesn't have...?"

"Yeah, wooden quills. And all aimed at the heart of your friend. But before we turn you over to Commissioner Beste I want to know something. Why did you only attack people with the last names of animals?

"That was Waldo's idea. He's got a sick sense of humor." Waldo blushed. Jersey looked at Fred, then at me. "Doesn't anything stop you, Ventured?"

"Nothing I can think of," I said, "Let's go."

* * *



Just as we pulled up in front of 49 Maple Avenue, we heard a scream from the alley next to the building. We stumbled out of the car, tripped over Wilda, and ran toward the alley.

The alley was dark. There were no lights. We drew our guns and moved forward slowly keeping close to the walls until our eyes adjusted to the darkness.

Suddenly a voice called out, "Save yourself Waldo. Get back to the hideout. I'll hold them off." From the other end of the alley we heard a shuffling sound.

My eyes had adjusted to the dark by now. I walked down the alley quickly, my gun ready. Suddenly, from out of nowhere, a brick knocked my gun from my hand. It clattered down the alley behind me.

Before I could turn to get it, I saw a small figure leap from behind a garbage can about twenty feet in front of me. In his hand he held a meat cleaver. He charged directly at me.

I knew I was in trouble. Big trouble. The grapevine had reported that the Mob was importing a number of crazed Hungarian dwarves. If this was one of them, I was a dead man. Those babies were tough. They didn't allow anything to stop them.

In desparation I picked up an old shoe and heaved it. It hit the dwarf square in the face, knocking off his glasses. He staggered and waved his hands in front of him blindly. Then he charged again, this time straight at the alley wall.

He hit the wall like a ton of bricks and fell. Out. Cold. By this time the Commissioner and Wilda had caught up with me. "How awful," gasped Wilda, "a crazed dwarf."

"Yeah," I replied, "but obviously not Hungarian." I stooped and picked up a small white business card that had fallen out of the dwarf's pocket. Elephant dead?" I asked. The Commissioner nodded.

"Commissioner," I started, "you'd better put all the men you can spare on detail guarding Fredrick F. Flamingo. I've got a hunch that's where they'll strike next." I turned to leave.

"How awful," gasped Wilda, "but where are you going?"

"I've got to see the SPCA about getting a friend of mine on parole," I said.

By the next night everything was prepared. I was ready to act. That's why around eight that night I was peering through the keyhole of a crummy apartment in one of the sleazier scetions of the city. This was the address on the card I took from the dawrf.

Through the keyhole I could see at least one person in the room. He was playing solitaire and cheating. I couldn't see his face.

I stood up and drew my rod. Then I kicked open the door. The lone figure whirled around and saw who it was.

"Jersey Jeff," I said. "I thought you were serving time in upsate New York for molesting little old ladies."

"I broke out, Ventured."

continued next page.

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